

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

CLAIMS

- 1 1. A purchasing agent system comprising:
- 2 a purchase interface means;
- 3 a database means; and
- 4 a communications medium means;
- 5 wherein said purchase interface means permits creation of said database means
- 6 to direct purchase requests through said communications medium means to
- 7 remote auction and/or sales sites; and
- 8 wherein said purchase interface means accepts purchase requests via human
- 9 and/or remote automated data inputs.

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EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

- 1 7. A purchasing agent system comprising:
- 2 an auction profile database (APD);
- 3 an auction profile configuration tool (APCT);
- 4 an item selector (IS);
- 5 an item search manager (ISM);
- 6 an item database (ID);
- 7 an auction bid controller (ABC);
- 8 an auction command interface (ACI);
- 9 an auction confirmation receiver (ACR); and
- 10 a result definition and verification unit (RDVU);
- 11 wherein
- 12 said APCT helps purchasers generate and store auction profiles in said
- 13 APD to define the profile of available auction site(s);
- 14 said APD information is utilized by said ISM to determine the method to
- 15 be used to access said auction site(s);
- 16 said ID is created by said ISM and indicates what items are available from
- 17 what auction sites for what price;
- 18 said IS provides a mechanism for the purchaser to enter a desired item
- 19 for purchase;
- 20 said RDVU receives item information from said IS with a list of auctions
- 21 from said ISM and presents the current bid range of all the
- 22 auctions to the purchaser, requesting a maximum bid;

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

- 1 said ACR receives auction confirmation information from said auction
- 2 site(s); and
- 3 said ABC communicates with said ACI to control bids to said auction
- 4 site(s) under the direction of said ISM.

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EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

1 8. The purchasing agent system of Claim 7 wherein said ISM and/or said
2 ACI and/or said ACR communicate with one or more Internet-based web
3 auction sites.

1 9. The purchasing agent system of Claim 7 wherein said ISM and/or said
2 ACI and/or said ACR communicate with one or more Internet-based e-
3 commerce web sites.

1 10. The purchasing agent system of Claim 7 wherein said ACR communicates
2 with said auction site(s) using electronic mail.

1 11. The purchasing agent system of Claim 7 wherein said system is
2 implemented on a personal computer (PC).

1 12. The purchasing agent system of Claim 7 wherein said system is
2 implemented on a personal computer (PC) running the Microsoft™
3 Windows™ operating environment.

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EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

- 1 13. A purchasing agent system comprising:
- 2 an auction profile database (APD) means;
- 3 an auction profile configuration tool (APCT) means;
- 4 an item selector (IS) means;
- 5 an item search manager (ISM) means;
- 6 an item database (ID) means;
- 7 an auction bid controller (ABC) means;
- 8 an auction command interface (ACI) means;
- 9 an auction confirmation receiver (ACR) means; and
- 10 a result definition and verification unit (RDVU) means;
- 11 wherein
- 12 said APCT means helps purchasers generate and store auction profiles
- 13 in said APD means to define the profile of available auction site(s);
- 14 said APD means information is utilized by said ISM means to determine
- 15 the method to be used to access said auction site(s);
- 16 said ID means is created by said ISM means and indicates what items are
- 17 available from what auction sites for what price;
- 18 said IS means provides a mechanism for the purchaser to enter a desired
- 19 item for purchase;
- 20 said RDVU means receives item information from said IS means with a
- 21 list of auctions from said ISM means and presents the current bid
- 22 range of all the auctions to the purchaser, requesting a maximum
- 23 bid;

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

- 1 said ACR means receives auction confirmation information from said
- 2 auction site(s); and
- 3 said ABC means communicates with said ACI means to control bids to
- 4 said auction site(s) under the direction of said ISM means.

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EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

1 14. The purchasing agent system of Claim 13 wherein said ISM and/or said
2 ACI and/or said ACR means communicate with one or more Internet-
3 based web auction sites.

1 15. The purchasing agent system of Claim 13 wherein said ISM and/or said
2 ACI and/or said ACR means communicate with one or more Internet-
3 based e-commerce web sites.

1 16. The purchasing agent system of Claim 13 wherein said ACR means
2 communicates with said auction site(s) using electronic mail.

1 17. The purchasing agent system of Claim 13 wherein said system is
2 implemented on a personal computer (PC).

1 18. The purchasing agent system of Claim 13 wherein said system is
2 implemented on a personal computer (PC) running the Microsoft™
3 Windows™ operating environment.

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EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

19. ⁹⁰ 61 } A purchasing agent method comprising the steps of:
- 2 (a) utilizing a user dialog to register at one or more auction sites to
 - 3 obtain a user identification and/or password;
 - 4 (b) utilizing a user dialog to enter a product purchase request;
 - 5 (c) communicating with a first and/or next auction site;
 - 6 (d) determining if said product purchase request is available, and if
 - 7 not, proceeding to step (c);
 - 8 (e) determining if the current bid from said auction site is below the
 - 9 limit maximum permitted, and if not, proceeding to step (c);
 - 10 (f) placing a bid for said product purchase request with said auction
 - 11 site;
 - 12 (g) determining if said bid has been accepted, and if so, canceling
 - 13 outstanding bids at other auction sites and terminating the
 - 14 purchasing procedure;
 - 15 (h) otherwise, determining if bidding has been terminated, and if so,
 - 16 proceeding to step (c);
 - 17 (i) determining if time is running out on any of the current outstanding
 - 18 bids, and if so, canceling all high-cost outstanding bids and
 - 19 returning to step (g); and
 - 20 (j) otherwise, returning to step (c) to inquire if there are additional
 - 21 auction sites in which it might be advantageous to place a bid on
 - 22 said product purchase request.

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

1 20. The purchasing agent method of Claim 19 wherein one or more of said
2 method steps is implemented using a personal computer (PC).

1 21. The purchasing agent method of Claim 20 wherein said product purchase
2 requests are generated by a manufacturing resource and/or inventory
3 planning (MRP) system to supply parts and/or materials and/or supplies
4 for a commercial enterprise.

1 22. The purchasing agent method of Claim 19 wherein said product purchase
2 requests are generated by a manufacturing resource and/or inventory
3 planning (MRP) system to supply parts and/or materials and/or supplies
4 for a commercial enterprise.

1 23. The purchasing agent method of Claim 19 wherein said auction site is an
2 Internet-based web auction site.

1 24. The purchasing agent method of Claim 19 wherein said step (f) prioritizes
2 bid placement to permit only the lowest cost auction sites to be utilized in
3 the bidding process.

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

- 1 25. ^{DL} A purchasing agent method comprising the steps of:
- 2 (a) means for utilizing a user dialog to register at one or more auction
- 3 sites to obtain a user identification and/or password;
- 4 (b) means for utilizing a user dialog to enter a product purchase
- 5 request;
- 6 (c) means for communicating with a first and/or next auction site;
- 7 (d) means for determining if said product purchase request is
- 8 available, and if not, proceeding to step (c);
- 9 (e) means for determining if the current bid from said auction site is
- 10 below the limit maximum permitted, and if not, proceeding to step
- 11 (c);
- 12 (f) means for placing a bid for said product purchase request with said
- 13 auction site;
- 14 (g) means for determining if said bid has been accepted, and if so,
- 15 canceling outstanding bids at other auction sites and terminating
- 16 the purchasing procedure;
- 17 (h) means for otherwise determining if bidding has been terminated,
- 18 and if so, proceeding to step (c);
- 19 (i) means for determining if time is running out on any of the current
- 20 outstanding bids, and if so, canceling all high-cost outstanding bids
- 21 and returning to step (g); and
- 22 (j) means for otherwise returning to step (c) to inquire if there are
- 23 additional auction sites in which it might be advantageous to place
- 24 a bid on said product purchase request.

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

1 26. ~~1~~ The purchasing agent method of Claim 25 wherein one or more of said
2 means is implemented utilizing a personal computer (PC) means.

1 27. The purchasing agent method of Claim 26 wherein said product purchase
2 requests are generated by a manufacturing resource and/or inventory
3 planning (MRP) system to supply parts and/or materials and/or supplies
4 for a commercial enterprise.

1 28. The purchasing agent method of Claim 25 wherein said product purchase
2 requests are generated by a manufacturing resource and/or inventory
3 planning (MRP) system to supply parts and/or materials and/or supplies
4 for a commercial enterprise.

1 29. The purchasing agent method of Claim 25 wherein said auction site is an
2 Internet-based web auction site.

1 30. The purchasing agent method of Claim 25 wherein said step (f) prioritizes
2 bid placement to permit only the lowest cost auction sites to be utilized in
3 the bidding process.

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL307821777US

- 1 31 ³¹ A computer usable medium having computer-readable program code
2 means providing purchasing agent automation, said computer-readable
3 comprising instructions for:
- 4 (a) utilizing a user dialog to register at one or more auction sites to
5 obtain a user identification and/or password;
 - 6 (b) utilizing a user dialog to enter a product purchase request;
 - 7 (c) communicating with a first and/or next auction site;
 - 8 (d) determining if said product purchase request is available, and if
9 not, proceeding to step (c);
 - 10 (e) determining if the current bid from said auction site is below the
11 limit maximum permitted, and if not, proceeding to step (c);
 - 12 (f) placing a bid for said product purchase request with said auction
13 site;
 - 14 (g) determining if said bid has been accepted, and if so, canceling
15 outstanding bids at other auction sites and terminating the
16 purchasing procedure;
 - 17 (h) otherwise determining if bidding has been terminated, and if so,
18 proceeding to step (c);
 - 19 (i) determining if time is running out on any of the current outstanding
20 bids, and if so, canceling all high-cost outstanding bids and
21 returning to step (g); and
 - 22 (j) otherwise returning to step (c) to inquire if there are additional
23 auction sites in which it might be advantageous to place a bid on
24 said product purchase request.